

KARO-ECHO Meeting
11 February 2019
Kensington Community Center

Present:

Don Simon	NI6A
David Swanson	KJ6AAT
Howdy Goudey	KE6BEE
Mike Stuart	KM6CXI
Larry Vanselow	KK6GIO
Jamuel Starkey	KM6HBO
Hal Graboske	KK6NDF
Jon Heda	KC2OKI
Davis Todhunter	KK6PPR
Diane Richwine	KK6RED
Dave Roth	KM6TCB
Natalie DeJarlais	KM6UCF
Jay Fenton	KJ6WSS
Karen Leong Fenton	KK6ZPM
Edward Carney	KM6UBY

Approval of January 2019 minutes

Larry moved; seconded by David. Motion carried.

General items

New member of Board of Directors: Don has pointed out that we need board members who are willing to perform tasks for the club. At the recent executive board meeting, the officers added Howdy Goudy, our net control guru, as a board member at large. Next meeting will be at the Arlington Park Clubhouse in El Cerrito.

Nonprofit application update

Larry has filed the 1023EZ application for nonprofit status. Once that's approved, he will continue with the 501(c)(3) setup.

Larry has opened a checking account at Mechanics Bank. Larry, Hal, and Natalie are signatories on the account.

Larry has obtained a post office box. It is KAROECHO, P.O. Box 2025, El Cerrito, CA. 94530-3651

The club needs to reimburse Larry a few hundred dollars for his generous expenditures to-date.

Equipment funding

Don hopes that we will convince the Fire Department to continue to help obtain supplies (antennas, batteries, etc.). We also need to find a skilled repair person for the radio maintenance. As a 501(c)(3), we'll be able to request donations more easily.

Fundraising suggestions

Hal requested that if we know of someone who is interested in emergency communications, that we ask them if they're willing to donate to help cover the costs of local radios, antennas, etc.

David suggested that Neighborhood Watch groups might donate, and it's help to request donations from a large group of people, as small amounts can add up.

Karen suggested passing the hat at each meeting.

Karen also suggested having a registry where people could see the things we'd like (similar to an Amazon wish list).

Larry and Hal requested that people send in their dues (\$30/individual and \$40/family membership) to the KAROECHO post office box or bring to the meetings.

Coordination with the City of El Cerrito and Fire Departments

Kevin Janes will continue to be a part of our group, and will be the Fire Department's point of contact for KARO-ECHO.

Don reported that Howdy is working with Park & Rec to get a 105 amp hour battery installed at Tassajara Park, because it's currently on AC power only. It would also be useful to have a patch box to access the antenna if we can't get into the building.

Howdy reported that we have access to the clubhouses (Harding, for example), but the City of El Cerrito hasn't given Howdy the key for emergency access. He agrees that outdoor access to the antennas would be advisable, because the buildings may need to be inspected after an earthquake before access is granted. It would be good to have both a key and outside access, but we have to prioritize the needs. The city holds a tight rein on the keys. Knox A lock box might be a good option, but we don't know whether the city is open to that. The path of least resistance may be outside access to the antenna.

Hal stated that if we can make a pitch to the fire departments with a clear plan regarding communications and equipment needs, we may get cooperation. Don reminded us that the list of

existing equipment with locations is on the website, and that the current issue is really access to the sites. We may need to remove the equipment from the clubhouses and use go-carts, if access is not provided.

Simulated Emergency Test (SET) Recruiting

During a disaster, people will need to be in the field, so more need to be recruited and trained. In the short term, we need more operators for the SET on February 23. Don has done outreach, but more is needed and we appreciate anyone who is willing to participate. The SET instructions are on the website. This is the most important activity we've done, aside from the CERT Area 9 exercise. We're short a half-dozen people to staff all the locations.

CERT Coordination

Don and Rob have a one-page handout for local CERT classes, which can be passed out at the CERT trainings. We need approval from Chief Grupalo to distribute these at the meetings.

Chief Grupalo has approved the concept of an Emergency Communications training module for CERT trainees, but has requested that KARO-ECHO present the training. We'll need to find out how much time we'll have for the presentation, and whether the presenter would need to be a certified CERT trainer.

Don has the PDF of some existing (but out of date) training and is willing to update it if someone will export it from PDF format.

Jay suggested introducing CERT trainees to GMRS, and then gradually convert them to hams.

Mailing to former KARO-ECHO members/local licensees

There are almost 200 licensed hams in El Cerrito and Kensington. The FCC website has addresses and call signs. Don has envelopes, so we just need stamps and the printouts. In the past, Chief Gibson has supported a mailing by paying with Fire Department funds. Don will talk to Gibson.

Karen suggested that a hook would be to emphasize the Thursday night nets so that people have an action item. Don pointed out that we really want to get people involved beyond the nets -- but that both things can be covered in the mailing. David suggested reminding people that the big one (earthquake) is coming.

Training

Radio training: There's a need to teach people to use their radios, so a followup to the HamCram would be good. Walnut Creek has a couple of followup classes for a total of four hours, where they program your radio and help people get started. Hal suggested that a followup to the HamCram as a

way to raise funds and recruit.

Ken Fowler teaches technician and general licensing classes. Howdy is taking the current general class that began in January in El Sobrante. There were over ten people at the initial meeting. It's not taught to the test; Ken actually covers the material. There are sample tests online for test preparation. In April, Ken will begin the technicians' class at Arlington Park Clubhouse in El Cerrito, which we're co-sponsoring with EBARC.

Equipment repair and installation

We need a KARO-ECHO working group for equipment repair. We have broken radios and antennas that have value if repaired.

Howdy mentioned that the buttons fell off the Kenwood radio, and warned that if you put the older radios face down, buttons will fall off because the foam has disintegrated. We're starting a repair group even though we don't have a lot of expertise. Ken Fowler would be a great addition if we could get him involved.

Howdy is picking up a Diamond x-500HNA antenna that was installed at the old El Cerrito Senior Center, but needs repair. Anyone who wants to learn about antennas could get involved. This will happen after the SET and will be announced via the newsletter.

Hal would like the group to set up sessions where people can join to learn a specific skill.

Karen suggested that if the repair sessions be scheduled rather than ad hoc. She'd prefer a predictable time.

Secondary frequency proposal

On simplex, "de-sensing" occurs if you have a strong signal nearby that causes bleedthrough. Don proposed that we make our secondary frequency 146.475 instead of 146.430. This is reserved for us by the county. There was 100% agreement and no opposition.

Training Exercises

Howdy & Jay spoke about radio battery lifetime evaluations

Jay stated that people should be planning for the big one, and that we should be prepared for about five days of battery power. Stronger batteries are available from China. Hal requested that Jay write up something about battery resources. David recommended a 12 volt charger that will work in your car as well.

Howdy distributed a battery spreadsheet and showed us an apparatus that measures RF power.

Surprising finding: the lower the power, the less load on the battery, but the efficiency goes down. If you goes to low power, you can be under 10% of power getting into RF. It doesn't scale linearly.

Howdy will allow sharing his measuring equipment that measures input and output. Takeaway: if you're transmitting a lot, like during the last SET, the duty cycle may be at 80-90% Somebody only receiving uses far less power. Audio receive volume even matters a little. If you have a strong signal, back off on the power. Keep transmissions succinct.

SET preparation

We'll check into the net at 9:30 on February 23. The pre-assigned people will check in from their assigned locations, and the others will be assigned by net control to areas in need. Be ready to report the Mike Mike (Mercali) scale.

Don is going to provide a packet to all the SET participants with forms, messages, MM scale, etc.. If possible, participants should arrange to pick up their packets from Don; otherwise, packets will be delivered by email or doorstep.

Every CERT area will have two timed messages to send. Some stations will have bulletins (*e.g.*, request for resources).

Jamuel will be inside at the EOC, where Kevin will arrange for us to use the City Hall antenna and radio.

If we have enough people, we'll probably place a portable near the EOC on a secondary frequency. We may need relays unless people have good portable equipment. We'll have 3 or 4 channels going simultaneously, which will expand our capacity to convey messages.

The instructions are under Events on the website, and are linked from the latest newsletter.

Don reminded us that E, P, W, R = emergency, priority, welfare, routine precedences

The quickest way to get a fill (when the word check in the header does not correspond to the text body) is for the transmitting station to repeat the first letter of every word.

Meeting adjourned.